

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. (currently amended) A blower comprising:
  - a carrying frame provided with a base plate;
  - a fan comprising a fan housing mounted on the carrying frame, wherein the fan housing has an intake opening that faces the base plate and is spaced from the base plate and wherein an intake gap is formed between the base plate and the fan housing;
  - an internal combustion engine driving the fan in order to take in working air through the intake opening and to blow out the working air through a blower tube;
  - a leaf shield for preventing leaves and debris from entering the fan housing, wherein the leaf shield covers the intake gap;
    - a protection device preventing accidental insertion of a hand into the intake gap;
    - wherein the leaf shield is comprised of a foam material having coarse pores;
    - wherein the leaf shield is a monolithic foam material block having a central air chamber adjoining the intake opening of the fan housing, wherein the monolithic foam material block of the leaf shield forms the protection device;
    - at least one fastening element arranged between the base plate and the fan housing and connecting the base plate and the fan housing;
    - wherein the at least one fastening element penetrates the foam material of the monolithic foam material block and secures by positive fit the monolithic foam material block between the base plate and the fan housing.
2. (original) The blower according to claim 1 configured as a backpack blower.
3. (original) The blower according to claim 1, wherein the foam material is an open-pore foam.
4. (canceled)
5. (previously presented) The blower according to claim 1, wherein the central air chamber is a cylindrical opening having a center axis positioned substantially perpendicularly to an intake direction of the working air into the intake opening.
6. (canceled)
7. (canceled)

8. (canceled)

9. (canceled)

10. (currently amended) The blower according to claim 1, 9, wherein the ~~leaf shield is a monolithic foam material block having a central air chamber adjoining the intake opening of the fan housing,~~ wherein two of the at least one fastening ~~screws~~ element are provided, and wherein the ~~said~~ two fastening ~~screws~~ elements are positioned diametrically opposed to one another relative to a circumference of the air chamber.

11. (currently amended) The blower according to claim 1, 9, ~~wherein the leaf shield is a monolithic foam material block having a central air chamber adjoining the intake opening of the fan housing,~~ wherein several of the at least one fastening ~~screws~~ element are arranged about a circumference of the air chamber at substantially identical circumferential spacing relative to one another.